

**Amendments to the claims:**

This listing of claims replaces all prior versions and listings of claims in this application.

**Listing of Claims:**

1-10. (cancelled)

11. (currently amended) A method of producing a separation matrix with eliminated or reduced microbial content, the method comprising steps of:

providing a microbially contaminated separation matrix in a housing or container, wherein the microbially contaminated separation matrix comprises a polymeric porous material in beaded form, a microfiltration hollow-fiber, or a flat sheet membrane, and wherein the separation matrix comprises immobilized ligand;

adding an aqueous antimicrobial preservation composition, which comprises at least one alkyl paraben, to said separation matrix in said housing or container;

allowing said aqueous antimicrobial preservation composition to exert its effect in said housing or container until the number of colony forming units (CFU) per g preservative composition is sufficiently reduced; and

rinsing said aqueous antimicrobial preservation composition from said housing or container to provide the separation matrix with eliminated or reduced microbial content and containing the immobilized ligand.

12. (original) The method as in claim 11, wherein said at least one alkyl paraben is methyl paraben, ethyl paraben, propyl paraben, or butyl paraben.

13. (cancelled)

14. (previously presented) The method as in claim 12, wherein the concentration of methyl paraben is between 0.5 and 2 g/liter.

15. (previously presented) The method as in claim 12, wherein the concentration of ethyl paraben is between 0.01 and 0.5 g/liter.

16. (previously presented) The method as in claim 12, wherein the concentration of propyl paraben is between 0.12 and 0.25 g/liter.

17. (previously presented) The method as in claim 12, wherein the concentration of butyl paraben is at least 0.002 g/liter.
18. (previously presented) The method as in claim 11, wherein said aqueous antimicrobial preservation composition further comprises a solubility increasing agent at a concentration that is sufficient to maintain said at least one alkyl paraben in solution.
19. (original) The method as in claim 18, wherein said solubility increasing agent is propylene glycol.
20. (previously presented) The method as in claim 9, wherein the concentration of said propylene glycol is not more than 20 g/liter.
21. (previously presented) The method as in claim 11, wherein said aqueous antimicrobial preservation composition is sterilized before it is added to said separation matrix.
22. (original) The method as in claim 21, wherein said aqueous antimicrobial preservation composition is sterilized by means of steam or filter sterilization.
23. (previously presented) The method as in claim 11, wherein said aqueous antimicrobial preservation composition is allowed to exert its effect for at least 6 h.
24. (currently amended) The method as in claim 11, wherein said aqueous antimicrobial preservation composition is allowed to exert its effect until bacteria are reduced by at least log 2 at 6 hours, log 3 at 24 hours, with or organism recovered at 7 day and thereafter, and yeasts/moulds reduced by at least log 2 at 7 day, with no increase thereafter [[EP 1997 test protocol is fulfilled]].
25. (currently amended) The method as in claim 11, wherein said aqueous antimicrobial preservation composition is allowed to exert its effect until bacteria are reduced by at least log 1 at 24 hours, log 3 at 7 days, with no increase recovered at 14 days and thereafter[[:]], and yeasts/moulds reduced by at least log 1 at 14 days, with no increase thereafter.
26. (new) The method as in claim 11, wherein the separation matrix comprises polysaccharide gel.

27. (new)      The method as in claim 11, wherein the separation matrix comprises agarose.
28. (new)      The method as in claim 11, wherein the immobilized ligand comprises a protein.
29. (new)      The method as in claim 11, wherein the immobilized ligand comprises avidin.
30. (new)      The method as in claim 11, wherein the immobilized ligand comprises streptavidin.